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ABSTRACT

Although demand for staff in the child care sector has increased over recent years in Scotland, there are difficulties in encouraging individuals to become involved in this field of employment. This survey investigated the characteristics of the early education and child care sector, particularly those which may affect its expansion and development. Three types of child care providers were surveyed by mail: (1) a sample of 3,000 from approximately 5,000 preschool centers; (2) all 364 local authority-run out-of-school clubs; and (3) 2,500 from approximately 7,500 registered childminders. Responses were obtained from 1,133 preschool centers (return rate 38 percent), 135 out-of-school clubs (35 percent), and 1,096 childminders (44 percent). Among the key findings, the responses indicated the total number of child care staff in Scotland to be around 32,100, with a heavy reliance on part-time staff. Around 60 percent of child care staff held some form of child care-related qualification, and most had some previous experience. The pay levels appeared low, comparable to part-time catering or bar workers. Of those who had recruited staff in the previous year, one third of preschool centers and 60 percent of out-of-school clubs had difficulty filling paid positions; the main difficulty was a lack of applicants with the necessary qualifications or experience. There was an apparent need to bring more staff into the service and to raise levels of experience and qualification among existing staff. Findings suggest that to widen the appeal of child care work and improve the quality of the workforce, it would be necessary to enhance its status, offer clearer career progression, and increase pay levels. (KB)

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Interchange 73

Early Education and Childcare Workforce Survey

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Early Education and Childcare Workforce Survey

Introduction

Demand for staff in the childcare sector has increased and is predicted to rise more quickly over the next few years. However, there are apparent difficulties in encouraging individuals to become involved in this field of employment and it has been suggested that significant numbers of staff are withdrawing from the sector.

The Early Education and Childcare Workforce Survey was therefore commissioned from the MVA Consultancy by the Scottish Executive Education Department. The survey was the first of its kind in Scotland and is important to the development of the Childcare Strategy. Its aims were to obtain information on the characteristics of the early education and childcare sector, its workforce and factors that might inhibit expansion and development of the sector.

The survey was conducted by post using a self-completion questionnaire. Three different types of childcare providers were surveyed: a sample of 3,000 from approximately 5,000 pre-school centres, all 364 local authority-run out of school clubs, and 2,500 from approximately 7,500 registered childminders. Responses were obtained from 1,133 pre-school centres (38%), 135 out of school clubs (37%) and 1,096 childminders (44%). Fieldwork was conducted in April/May 2000.

Key Findings

- Survey estimates suggest that, at the time of the survey, around 319,000 children were cared for across Scotland. Approximately 265,000 attended pre-school centres, 24,000 were enrolled in out of school clubs, and 30,000 were cared for by childminders.
- The total number of childcare staff in Scotland was estimated to be around 32,100. Twenty-two thousand were employed in pre-school centres, 2,600 in out of school clubs, and 7,500 as childminders.
- There was a heavy reliance on part-time staff, with only around one in three pre-school centre and out of school club staff being employed on a full-time basis.
- Around 60% of childcare staff in Scotland held some form of childcare related qualification, and most had some form of previous experience in the sector, either in paid work or as a volunteer. Qualifications (comprising of accredited and other qualifications) were most prevalent in the pre-school sector, being held by 74%, and least common among childminders (25%). Thirty eight per cent of out of school clubs staff held a qualification.

- The average hourly rate for trainees was less than £4 per hour, for assistants £4.70, for leaders £5.40, and supervisors £6.30. These pay levels appear low, being typical of rates paid to part time catering or bar workers or to junior agency office staff. By contrast, childcare staff work in an area where qualifications are desirable and where significant responsibility is involved.

- Twenty-seven per cent of pre-school centres and out of school clubs had taken on new staff in the previous year. Of those who had recruited or attempted to recruit in the previous year, one third of pre-school centres and 60% of out of school clubs had had difficulty filling paid posts. Somewhat fewer had problems filling voluntary posts. The main difficulty was a lack of applicants with the necessary qualifications or experience. The proportion of unfilled posts was 4.5% for pre-school centres and 9.7% for out of school clubs.

- Nearly half of childminders had some spare capacity. The proportion of unfilled places was 6.9% for pre-school centres and 10.2% for out of school clubs.

- There is an apparent need to bring more staff into the service and to raise levels of experience and qualification amongst existing staff. However, recruiters had encountered problems filling posts during the previous year, and this situation would be exacerbated if pre-school centres and out of school clubs attempted to expand.

Objectives

The project sought to provide information on:

- the size and characteristics of the workforce employed in the childcare sector;

- the hours worked; qualifications; experience and training needs of staff employed in the sector;

- the distribution of the above across different types of early education and childcare provision;

- pressure for expansion of provision experienced by providers; and

- factors, including staffing, which inhibit the expansion of early education and childcare provision.

Capacity and Staffing Levels

The approximate number of children cared for in Scotland can be estimated by grossing up the figures provided by respondents (though it should be noted that this assumes an unbiased response). The estimated numbers are:

Pre-school centres	265,000
Out of school clubs	24,000
Childminders	30,000

Pre-school centres in rural areas had smaller average rolls than those in urban areas (32 children compared to 70). There was a similar disparity for childminders, with urban carers looking after an average of 9.5 children, compared to five for rural childminders. However, this difference was not apparent for out of school clubs.

Nearly half of childminders had some spare capacity, and about half of out of school clubs had vacancies (10.2% of all places) or routinely kept places free for unexpected attendees. About half of pre-school centres also had vacancies (6.9% of all places).

The total number of staff in the sector in Scotland was estimated as:

Pre-school centres	22,000
Out of school clubs	2,600
Childminders	7,500

These figures include paid and voluntary staff employed on a full-time, part-time or occasional basis. Looking only at full-time staff, there were estimated to be around 10,000 working in pre-school centres and 450 in out of school clubs.

The average number of staff was around 4.5 for both pre-school centres and out of school clubs. This gives an average ratio of staff to children of 1:12 for pre-school centres and 1:11 for out of school clubs. However, it should be borne in mind that not all staff work, and not all children attend, at the same time. The average number of children cared for by childminders was just over four.

Types of Provision

Pre-school centres and out of school clubs were asked to classify themselves into one or more types of provision. The bulk of pre-school centres were either nursery schools/classes (41%) or playgroups (35%). A further 13% were private day nurseries. The remainder classified themselves as family centres (4%), crèches (4%), playschemes (1%), or other type of provision (2%).

Most out of school clubs (81%) described their provision as 'after school'. More than half (52%) were holiday playschemes, and 29% were 'before school' clubs. Four per cent said they covered in-service days.

Ownership

Around half (51%) of pre-school centres said they were local authority owned, 26% were in voluntary sector ownership, and 21% were privately owned. The remaining 1% were owned by independent schools.

Most out of school clubs (74%) were managed by voluntary committees. Equal numbers of the others (about 8%) were managed privately, jointly with a local authority, or solely by a local authority.

Umbrella Organisation Memberships

Sixty-three per cent of pre-school centres indicated that they belonged to an umbrella organisation, most commonly SPPA (39%). Eight per cent were members of HPS and 6% were members of SINA. Membership of an umbrella organisation was higher among out of school clubs, at 93%. Most clubs belonged to the Scottish Out of School Care Network (75%), followed by SASCA (13%) and SPPA (12%).

Most childminders (83%) belonged to SCMA, and 5% to other umbrella organisations.

Profile of Children in Early Education and Childcare

Most children cared for by pre-school centres (80%) were aged 3-8 years. In out of school clubs, half of children were aged 5-8, and almost all the remainder were aged 9-14. The age profile of children cared for by childminders was younger, with around one in three being under three years of age.

Age Profile of Children

Age	Pre-school centres	Out of school clubs	Childminders
	%	%	%
0-2 years	16	1	30
3-8 years	80	50	52
9-14 years	3	48	16
14+ years	*	1	2
N=	1,108	7,022	4,594

*=Less than 0.5%

Most children cared for were white. Fewer than 3% of children in pre-school centres and out of school clubs were from ethnic minorities, the most common groups being Indian, Pakistani and Chinese. Only 1% of children cared for by childminders were not white.

Half of pre-school centres and two thirds (65%) of out of school clubs had cared for children with special physical or educational needs during the last year. Fewer childminders (20%) had done so. (Note that a definition of 'special needs' was not provided to respondents, and these responses reflect their own interpretation.)

Opening hours

The great majority of pre-school centres and out of school clubs were open for at least part of the day for 5 days per week during school term. About 80% of centres operated each weekday morning and this fell to about 60% in the afternoons. The majority of afternoon centres were also open in the mornings. Most clubs also provided care during school holidays but only 27% of pre-school centres were open out of term time. Centres located in urban areas were more likely to provide care during school holidays than those in rural areas (37% compared with 15%). The majority of childminders offered care all year round.

Almost half (47%) of pre-school centres were open for up to 20 hours per week, a quarter were open for 21-30 hours, and the remainder for more than 30 hours. Rural centres had shorter average opening hours than those in urban areas.

During school term, 58% of out of school clubs were open for up to 10 hours per week, and most of the remainder were open for between 11 and 20 hours. A similar proportion of clubs (60%) were open for up to 10 hours per week during school holidays, but 30% extended their opening hours to beyond 41 hours per week to provide daytime care. The opening hours of clubs were similar in rural and urban areas.

More than half (57%) of childminders provided more than 30 hours of care per week, 22% provided between 21 and 30 hours, and 21% 20 hours or less. In common with pre-school centres, childminders in rural areas provided care for slightly fewer hours than those in urban locations.

Care before normal school hours was offered by one in five pre-school centres, a third of out of school clubs, and 60% of childminders. Provision of after-school care was similar, with the exception of out of school clubs, 95% of which were open after school.

Childcare was not widely available at weekends, with only 3% of childminders and even fewer pre-school centres or out of school clubs providing any weekend care.

Charges

The hourly charges for children aged 0-5, and over 5, are shown in the table below.

Hourly Charges for Childcare

	Pre-school centres	Out of school clubs	Childminders
	%	%	%
0-5 year olds			
£2 or less	66	81	45
£2.01 - £4	31	15	54
Over £4	3	4	*
N=	704	47	1,022
5+ year olds			
£2 or less	49	77	45
£2.01 - £4	48	20	55
Over £4	3	3	*
N=	116	125	825

*=Less than 0.5%

Approximately half of childcare providers charged £2 or less per hour, and half between £2 and £4. The average charges were similar for children aged under and over 5 years of age. Childminders tended to be the most expensive of the three types of care, and out of school clubs the least expensive, with around three-quarters of the latter charging £2 or less per hour.

Staff Profile

Almost all staff were female and white, although out of school clubs had a slightly higher proportion of male staff (8%). All age groups were represented, though most staff were under 55. As might be expected, few childminders (1%) were aged under 25, but this age group accounted for 22% of out of school club staff and 14% of pre-school centre staff.

Six per cent of pre-school centres and 4% of out of school clubs had at least one member of staff who spoke Gaelic. However, fewer than half these facilities offered childcare services in Gaelic. The figures were similar for childminders, with most who spoke Gaelic being in rural areas.

The majority of staff in pre-school centres were leaders (28%) or assistants (31%). In out of school clubs almost half of staff were assistants. In both types of provision the ratio of managers/supervisors to more junior staff was around 1:5.

Working Status

Most staff in pre-school centres (85%) and out of school clubs (78%) were employed on a permanent basis. Voluntary staff accounted for a very small proportion of employees.

Reflecting the shorter opening hours of out of school clubs, most staff (74%) in this type of provision worked part-time hours. In pre-school centres, 53% of staff were employed full-time.

Working Status of Childcare Staff

	Pre-school centre staff	Out of school club staff
	%	%
Full-time permanent (paid)	50	17
Part-time permanent (paid)	35	61
Full-time temporary (paid)	2	2
Part-time temporary (paid)	7	13
Full-time voluntary	1	4
Part-time voluntary	1	*
Occasional voluntary	*	1
Paid sessional	3	*
Other	1	1
N=	4,505	616

*= Less than 0.5%

There was good stability in pre-school centre staffing, with 45% of staff having been in their post for 5 years or more, and a further 18% for 3-4 years. Fewer school clubs staff (24%) had a tenure of 5 years or more, this perhaps being more a reflection of their relative youth than indicative of greater instability. Almost half of childminders had been registered for 5 years or more.

Training and Qualifications

Most childcare staff had some form of previous experience (either paid or voluntary), although the types of experience varied somewhat by sector. Parental experience was the most common among childminders (84%) and pre-school centres (60%), whereas out of school club staff were the most likely to have gained experience as playworkers (50%).

Overall, staff in the sector were not highly qualified[1]. Approximately 60% of childcare staff across Scotland (around 20,000) held some form of childcare related qualification (including some non-recognised qualifications such as modules). The most commonly held (33%) was at SVQ3/HNC level. SVQ4/HND level qualifications were held by only 3% of staff, and teaching/degree level by 10%. SVQ2 and SVQ modules were each held by fewer than one in ten staff.

Pre-school centre staff were much more highly qualified than those in other parts of the sector, with three-quarters holding a qualification compared to 38% of out of school club staff and 25% of childminders. This disparity was particularly evident at the SVQ3/HNC, and the teaching/degree levels.

Qualifications Held

Level of qualification	Pre-school centre staff	Out of school club staff	Childminders	Estimated total number of staff in Scotland
	%	%	%	%
Teaching/degree level	15	3	3	3,300
SVQ4/HND level	4	2	1	900
SVQ3/HNC level	50	12	8	10,700
SVQ2 level	9	18	4	2,600
SVQ module	2	4	-	550
Other	15	13	12	4,200
Any qualification	74	38	25	19,900
No qualifications	26	62	75	12,200
N=	4505	616	1060	32,100

Looking at specific qualifications rather than levels, the most commonly held by pre-school centre staff was SNNEB (23%). This was followed by a teaching qualification (15%), HNC in Childcare and Education (13%), and NNEB/CACHE Diploma in Nursery Nursing (11%). Among out of school club staff, S/NVQ 2 Care and Education was the most common (11%). SNNEB was the most widespread among childminders (4%).

Managers and supervisors were the most likely to hold qualifications. In pre-school centres, 91% and 89% respectively did so, compared to 59% of assistants and 29% of trainees. In out of school clubs, 65% of managers and supervisors held a qualification, but only 28% of assistants and 7% of trainees

[1] Percentages quoted in respect of 'qualifications' refer to both accredited and other qualifications.

did so. In particular, senior staff were more likely to hold SNNEB and teaching qualifications.

The most commonly undertaken non-qualification training was first aid health and safety, which 15% of pre-school centre staff, 45% of out of school club staff and 41% of childminders had undergone. Other types of training undertaken by a significant proportion of staff included child protection and managing children's behaviour.

Non-Qualification Training Undertaken

Training topic	Pre-school centre staff	Out of school club staff	Childminders
	%	%	%
First aid health & safety	15	45	41
Curriculum framework	9	2	1
Child protection	6	20	15
Managing children's behaviour	5	17	25
Food hygiene	5	14	6
Observing/assessing children	5	2	2
Equal opportunities/ anti-discriminatory practice	2	8	13
Child development	3	6	15
Business side of childminding/ Business development	*	3	13
Assertiveness	2	3	12
Special needs	3	4	10
No training	71	37	37
N=	4505	616	1060

Respondents were asked about training needs. Around half of out of school club staff (48%) were felt to need some form of training, most commonly managing children's behaviour (14%) and child protection (12%). A smaller proportion (31%) of pre-school centre staff had training needs, with a wide variety of topics being mentioned.

More than half of pre-school centres (55%) had a budget for training purposes, but fewer out of school clubs (35%) had. Around one in four qualified staff in each type of facility had funded their qualification themselves. However, in the majority of cases the employer or local authority provided funding.

Constraints to Undertaking Training or Qualifications

Around a quarter of out of school club staff and childminders expressed an interest in pursuing qualifications. Fewer pre-school centre staff (10%) expressed this interest, but staff in this type of provision were more likely to hold qualifications already.

There were constraints on staff undertaking further training. A fifth of out of school clubs, four fifths of pre-school centres and almost all childminders said that such barriers existed.

There were similarities in the sorts of constraint across the three types of provision. Pre-school centres were most likely to mention staff cover (59%), followed by lack of funding (43%). The most common barrier for out of school clubs was clearly lack of funding (63%), and although this was also an issue for childminders, their biggest constraint was lack of time (79%).

There were no significant differences in the nature or extent of constraints on training between childcare providers in rural and urban areas.

Pay

Low pay was widespread in the sector. The average hourly rates for different grades of staff are shown in the table below. Pay rates were higher for supervisors and leaders than junior staff, but were still low in comparison with other jobs requiring qualifications and the exercise of responsibility. Junior staff pay rates appear comparable with minimally skilled part time work in the catering or office agency staff work areas.

Average hourly rates of pay by grade of staff

Staff grade	Pre-school centres	Out of school clubs
Trainee	£3.80	£4.30
Assistant	£4.70	£4.80
Leader	£5.30	£5.60
Supervisor	£6.30	£6.40

Note: Averages (means) are approximations as information was collected in bands

In out of school clubs, average rates of pay were higher in urban areas than rural. This difference was less marked in pre-school centres.

Recruitment Issues

Approximately one in four pre-school centres and out of school clubs had one or more vacancies for paid posts. As a whole, the proportion of unfilled posts was 4.5% for pre-school centres and 9.7% for out of school clubs. This suggests that there were around 2,300 vacancies for childcare staff across Scotland at the time of the survey. In most cases only one post was unfilled, but in a few instances there were five or more vacancies. In pre-school centres (but not out of school clubs), urban facilities were more likely to have vacancies than rural ones.

Sixty per cent of pre-school centres had one or more staff members leave during the previous year. The figure was similar for out of school clubs (57%). Most of

those with turnover had only one or two staff members leave. In terms of new recruits, around three-quarters of both centres and clubs had at least one starter in the previous year.

Number of Starters and Leavers During the Previous Year

	Pre-school centres	Out of school clubs
	%	%
Number of starters		
None	27	26
One	38	32
Two or more	36	43
Mean	*1.5*	*1.7*
Number of leavers		
None	39	43
One	37	25
Two or more	24	32
Mean	*1.1*	*1.1*
N=	807	134

On average, during the previous year, the number of starters exceeded the number of leavers in both pre-school centres and out of school clubs, suggesting that there had been overall growth in staff numbers despite high turnover levels. SEED figures, however, indicate that there had been a decrease in the number of registered childminders over the previous two years from approximately 8,200 in 1997 to 7,500 in 1999.

A significant number of centres and clubs that had recruited, or attempted to recruit, during the previous year had difficulty obtaining suitable personnel. This was particularly the case for out of school clubs, 60% of which encountered problems filling paid posts (compared to 33% of clubs). The main difficulties were finding staff with suitable qualifications or experience. Significant numbers also mentioned that they had no applicants, or that applicants had accepted jobs elsewhere.

Forty-three per cent of clubs that recruited were forced to take on staff without the required qualification or experience. This is reflected in the low prevalence of qualifications and training in this part of the sector. Although staff in pre-school centres were generally more highly qualified, 78% of those centres which recruited new staff had to take on an applicant who lacked appropriate training or qualifications.

Future Plans

Out of school clubs had the most definite plans for recruitment, with 41% indicating they would take on at least one new member of staff compared with 24% of pre-school centres. Assistants were the grade of staff most in demand.

When asked about intentions to stay in the sector, 77% of pre-school centre respondents, 68% of out of school club respondents, and 73% of childminders indicated they planned to stay in the sector, most of these in their current role.

Only around one in fifteen believed they would definitely leave childcare.

These findings indicate that many clubs intended to recruit in the following year, although it is not clear whether this was to fill vacancies created by leavers, or to permit growth in childcare capacity. However, there is some evidence that expansion is anticipated, and under way. For example, the average number of starters in the previous year was greater than the number of leavers, apparently without relieving the need to undertake further recruitment.

Relevant Findings for Policy

Current policy is to encourage expansion of this sector, with childcare places being available across Scotland and a service being delivered by suitably qualified staff.

Regarding service availability, the focus of this research was on supply, rather than on current or predicted demand. However, it seems that capacity is not in place to meet a demand significantly greater than that currently being serviced.

The nature of the service means that expansion must involve increased staff numbers. While more staff were recruited in the previous year than left, this required significant effort, and difficulties were reported in finding junior staff with suitable qualifications and experience. These difficulties were reflected in the generally low level of qualifications of the current junior staff. From the survey evidence about the constraints operating in the sector, it appears that more accessible training would improve this situation. Current accessibility is perceived by many as poor, because of shortages of funding, time and staff cover.

Apart from skill considerations, more accessible training could give the sector a more credible career structure. However, pay is also an issue, in that there do not seem to be significant rewards for improved qualifications. Even the more senior staff members appear to be poorly rewarded in comparison with other sectors. The part time nature of much of the work may have an influence here, because it is traditionally associated with low status.

The survey findings suggest that in order to widen the appeal of this work and improve the quality of the workforce it would be necessary to:

- enhance its status, e.g. through more extensive training and qualifications;
- offer clearer career progression; and
- increase pay levels.

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Further information

If you have views on **Interchange** and/or wish to find out more about SEED's research programme, contact the Education and Young People Research Unit, The Scottish Executive Education Department, Room 1B Dockside, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ

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